

## **City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, Council Chambers, 795 Mass. Ave.**

April 12, 2017 – Minutes taken by Quinten Steenhuis

**Members Present:** Ilana Bechick, Joel Dashnaw, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, LizMarr, Janet Mosley, Anne Sherman, Meera Singh, Matthew St. Onge, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage

**Members Absent:** Keith Cialino, David Frank, Laura Nichols, Michael Papas, Kristen Watkins

**Staff Present:** Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, John Fitzgerald, Michael Orr

**Members of the Public Present:** Helen Snively

### **Housekeeping items**

Minutes of March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting passed without objection.

### **City Updates**

May meeting will be at 344 Broadway, the City Hall Annex, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room.

Staffing updates: interviews for a program manager are ongoing. Michael expects to fill the position over the summer.

Upcoming outreach volunteer opportunities (contact Camilla at [celvis@cambridgema.gov](mailto:celvis@cambridgema.gov)):

- April 15<sup>th</sup>: Science Festival
- April 29<sup>th</sup>: Earth Day
- May 7<sup>th</sup>: May Fair
- May 20<sup>th</sup>: Fresh Pond Day
- June 3<sup>rd</sup>: Cambridge River Festival

The WasteWizard is a new online tool that is going out to bid. It will let city residents determine how to dispose of something. Expected to be available on the website in 2-3 months.

The city is hiring a marketing firm to help brand the zero waste initiative.

No update on curbside composting expansion yet. There may be more updates at the May or June meeting. Seeking input on the kitchen bins via a mailing list of current pilot users. One of the HDR consultants' recommendations was to go with a top ventilated bin, rather than the fully ventilated bin in the current pilot.

Joel and Michael were able to see the input and output from the composting facility and were impressed with the efficiency. Note: current anaerobic process separates out some items that are "compostable" such as most of the liners, compostable plastics, anything hard or fibrous. But the message should still be to keep composting all food waste, as compost contract could always change. There is a very small residue by weight of these materials in the compost bins, about 7-10% which is comparable for the residue in recycling collection. Process digests the methane from decomposition and then leftover organic material is pelletized and used for fertilizer.

Business recycling pilot: the city council wants to offer curbside recycling to small businesses that can accept weekly collection and can store 2 large totes. No start date. It would follow residential routes. Budget has been approved for a pilot that would start in the fall.

### **Discussion topics**

HDR is the Ontario-based waste management consulting group. For full recap of HDR consultants meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, see the executive summary sent a few weeks ago. Presentation followed this closely.

HDR reviewed city's waste target, where we are, and possible expansions. Kitchen waste / organics are the best way to meet our weight-based target. They are heavy (lot of water) and are the best material to

eliminate from the waste stream that we don't currently do yet. Possible more difficult expansions would be for diapers and pet waste—could take regulatory change. Current process could separate bags/non-organic component of diapers, and is safe, but law doesn't allow it yet. Diapers are 3-4% of our waste stream. Possible issue: zinc oxide in diaper cream? This blocked a different diaper collection service many years ago—Deer Island MWRA facility complained of too much zinc in the effluent. Co-collection could cut costs (using one truck with barrier to collect both trash and recycling). Reducing garbage collection to every 2 weeks while keeping organics/recycling to every week would incentivize waste reduction.

Ontario has an advance disposal fee that is charged to businesses that helps pay for later waste collection. Probably no political will in Cambridge for this.

Overall review of waste ordinance: some things don't make sense now, e.g., 50 gallon waste limit which was created before we had separate recycling and compost pickups. Should limit be based on weight instead? Be easier to change based on new trends that we can't foresee yet? We should look at best practices from other jurisdictions.

### **Sub-committee Reports**

We had brief report backs from each sub-committee.

Policy committee: will keep reviewing policies.

Schools: working on materials to distribute in schools.

Events: see the earlier event calendar. Also, working on trying to arrange for a sustainability-oriented reading for the reading series at Cambridge Public Libraries.

Behavior change and marketing: need to figure out what concrete actions we can take in the committee vs. recommendations. Discussed using social pressure/"nudge"-type incentives to encourage recycling/compost rates, competing with different routes. Agreed simplifying messages on materials (less detail is better) would increase participation rate. Opportunity to get good rate to advertise on new recycling bins in MBTA stations. Other ways to engage: sharing stories, door hangers, videos like those made for CCTV a few years ago.

Analytics: looking at franchising collection routes (would give rights to collect commercial waste to particular firms, reducing traffic and maybe increasing efficiency) and leveraging private partnerships.

### **Closing**

There will be a social event after the Earth Day activities on 4/29, starting right at 1:30. Michael has details.